

Managing Stress, Teen

Stress is the physical, mental, and emotional experience that a person has when he or she faces a challenge in life. Many people think that stress is always bad, but most stress is just a normal part of life. Stress is only bad when you struggle to manage it, or when you think that you cannot deal with it. Learning to live with stress is an important life skill.

Stress can be positive ("good stress"), like stress associated with a vacation, a competition, or a date. Good stress can make you feel energized and motivated to do your best. Stress can be negative ("bad stress") when it is caused by something like a big test, a fight with a friend, or bullying.

How to recognize signs of stress

If you are experiencing bad stress, you may:

- Feel anxious and tense.
- Have problems concentrating, performing in school, eating, or sleeping.
- Feel moody or angry.
- Feel like you have too much to handle (*overwhelmed*).
- Fight with others or have problems with friends.
- Express anger suddenly (*have outbursts*).
- Feel the need to use alcohol or drugs, including cigarettes, to help you deal with stress.
- Have thoughts about harming yourself.
- Want to stay away from friends or family (*isolate* yourself).

Follow these instructions at home:

- Ask for help when you need it. A trusted adult such as a family member, teacher, or school counselor may be able to suggest some ways to deal with stress.
- Find ways to calm yourself down when you feel stressed, such as:
 - Doing deep breathing.
 - Listening to music.
 - Talking with someone you trust.
- Learn to regularly release stress and relax through hobbies, exercise, or telling others how you feel.
- Be honest with yourself about times when you are struggling with stress. **Do not** just wait for the feeling to go away or the situation to resolve on its own.
- Eat a healthy diet, exercise regularly, and get plenty of sleep.
- **Do not** use drugs. **Do not** drink alcohol.
- **Do not** use any products that contain nicotine or tobacco, such as cigarettes, e-cigarettes, and chewing tobacco. If you need help quitting, ask your health care provider.
- Keep all follow-up visits as told by your health care provider. This is important.



Where to find support

You can find support for managing stress from:

- Your health care provider.
- A school counselor.

- A therapist who specializes in working with teens and families.
- Friends or support groups at school.

Where to find more information

You can find more information about managing stress from:

- TeensHealth: www.kidshealth.org
- American Psychological Association: www.apa.org

Contact a health care provider if:

- You feel depressed.
- You are not doing well in school, or you lose interest in school.
- Your stress is extreme and keeps getting worse.
- You withdraw from friends and normal activities.
- You have extreme mood changes.
- You start to use alcohol or drugs.

Contact a health care provider if:

You have thoughts of hurting yourself or others.

If you ever feel like you may hurt yourself or others, or have thoughts about taking your own life, get help right away. You can go to your nearest emergency department or call:

- **Your local emergency services (911 in the U.S.).**
- **A suicide crisis helpline, such as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255. This is open 24 hours a day.**

Summary

- Stress is the physical, mental, and emotional experience that a person has when he or she faces a challenge in life. Some stress is good, and other kinds of stress may not be good.
- Ask for help when you need it. A trusted adult such as a family member, teacher, or school counselor may be able to suggest some ways to deal with stress.
- Practice good self-care by eating well, exercising, relaxing, and getting the support that you need.
- Be honest with yourself about times when you are struggling with stress. **Do not** just wait and hope for the feeling to go away.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.